

REMARKS

The foregoing Amendment and remarks which follow are responsive to the Office Action mailed March 9, 2004 in relation to the above-identified patent application. In that Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 138, 139 and 141-147 under 35 U.S.C. Section 112 due to a grammatical informality in Claim 138. Additionally, Claims 138, 139 and 143-147 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as being anticipated by the Matsumoto reference. Claims 138, 139 and 141-147 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(e) as being anticipated by the Roos reference.

By this Amendment, Applicant has cancelled Claims 138, 139 and 143-147, in favor of new Claims 148-158 which have been added into prosecution. Of these, new Claim 148 is independent in nature, with Claims 149-158 being either directly or indirectly dependent thereon.

In the specification of the originally filed application, both the pawl and the driving and indexing member are common to all of the embodiments of the latch arrangement. The driving and indexing member itself appears as either a rotary or a linear indexing member. In most embodiments of the latch arrangement, the driving and indexing member is described in terms of bi-directional movement. Projections of the driving and indexing member are themselves embodied in different ways, with one such embodiment comprising plural projections as described with regard to Figure 9. New independent Claim 148 makes specific reference to both the pawl and the driving and indexing member (including the at least one projection extending therefrom).

Also described in new independent Claim 148 is the pawl release member and the actuation member. The pawl release member is driven by the interior and exterior door handles, such as the levers 700 and 800 shown in Figures 17 and 18. The pawl release member(s) has/have corresponding coupling member(s) 300, 400, 350, 450. The actuation member, which is itself embodied in every example of the latch arrangement, corresponds to the pawl actuator 30 shown in Figure 11 and operates to rotate the pawl to latch or unlatch the latch bolt. The sequence of operation of the driving and indexing member as described in new Claim 148 and the operation of the projection(s) on the

coupling members and actuation member are described in detail in relation to Figures 22-25.

With particular regard to certain ones of the dependent claims added into prosecution via this Amendment, the powered closure of the door between partially latched and fully latched positions as recited in new Claim 149 is describe in relation to Figures 11-13, and is found in all of those embodiments of the latch arrangement in which the latch bolt is operatively connected to the driving and indexing member. With regard to new Claim 155, the spring bias to a central, neutral position is described in relation to the rotary member 50 of Figure 24, and the rotary indexing and driving member 50 of Figure 21.

Applicant respectfully submits that new independent Claim 148 is not anticipated or rendered obvious by either the Matsumoto or Roos references cited in the subject Office Action, considered either alone or in combination. The latch arrangement as described in new independent Claim 148 represents a significant improvement over the prior art, by allowing a single electric motor and a single indexer to control the opening of the door or other closure, as well as locking and unlocking of the latch, electrically and entirely independently of the mechanical operations of the handles, key and still knob. Further, the latch arrangement described in Claim 148 enables sequencing of the various operations of the latch, so as to reduce the required amount of torque delivered from the motor. As a result, enormous savings in the number of components and in the size and weight of the latch are enabled by the latch arrangement. The optional feature of the door or other closure closing under electric power as recited in new Claim 149 can be done using the same single electric motor.

Applicant respectfully submits that the structural attributes of the latch arrangement recited in Claim 148 explicitly distinguishes over the teachings of the Matsumoto reference, which fails to disclose the use of an indexer for door locking and unlocking, and instead teaches the use of electrical switches. The Roos reference itself fails to disclose locking and unlocking of the latch by the same mechanism that does the opening and closing.

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On the basis of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that the stated grounds of rejection have been overcome, and that new Claims 148-158 are in condition for allowance. An early Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully requested.

If any additional fee is required, please charge Deposit Account Number 19-4330.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: B. B. Brunda

Customer No.: 007663

Bruce B. Brunda
Registration No. 28,497
STETINA BRUNDA GARRED & BRUCKER
75 Enterprise, Suite 250
Aliso Viejo, California 92656
Telephone: (949) 855-1246

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